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A FRENCH CRITIC ON AMERICAN HOUSES.

THE French art publications are directing their attention more and more to the art movement on this side of the Atlantic. Some years ago they found out that we had some designers and one or two painters among us, and now Monsieur G. de Leris, in the *Revue des Arts Decoratifs*, finds material in the "American Habitation" for a brilliant article full of the usual lively absurdities of a Frenchman who has just discovered some new thing to talk about, and has not taken time to see what it is.

His first sentence is enough to demonstrate his inaccurate way of observing things. "The Americans," says he, "are not accustomed to do things by halves," which is, alas, exactly what they have always been in the habit of doing. He goes on to state that in the last twenty years we have developed a veritable passion for works of art of all sorts, and better still we have sought the practical application of the science of æsthetics to the demands of every-day life. Our taste is not yet formed, he says, and therein he is right; but we have a future, and like a practical people as we are known by Europeans to be, we have, it seems, already made a good step in the direction of developing the artistic sentiment to the profit of our industries. If he had said that we are far advanced in the "exploitation" of such artistic taste as we have for the profit of our great manufacturers, his opening statement would be much nearer the truth.

"The type of the American house is the Colonial house," he proceeds to tell us. Would that it were! It is evident from the description that follows that he supposes that the brown-stone fronts of New York and the brick and marble residences of Philadelphia are "Colonial." It is a wonder that he does not include under this denomination the newly-erected mansions in the neighborhood of Central Park which he charitably surrounds with gardens.

But this introductory flourish achieved, M. de Leris gets down to realities and gives a fair description of the ordinary Philadelphia house of Spruce Street or of Pine Street, with its straightforward staircase, its dining-room communicating with the kitchen by an elevator, its "library" and its bath-tub so objectionably placed. The cellars and the back-buildings are not forgotten, and the uniformity of style in everything is remarked upon over and over again, as if such a thing were unknown in Paris. Returning to New York, our critic describes as an exception a house which we think we recognize. The large hall with its majolica vases, its ancient clock and antique chairs, its little reception-room hung with tapestries and embroideries, and the dining-room with its mahogany furniture inlaid with copper, it seems to us we have seen. It is indeed an exceptional house, and our author has made a hit in noting it. But in describing the Union League Club he has mixed up things very much. He attributes the painting of the vaulted ceiling of the dining-room to Mr. Frank Hill Smith, and seems to think that Messrs. L. C. Tiffany & Co. rejoice in the epithet "Hottentot" which has been fastened on their style of decoration. The Veteran's room he evidently confounds with the Veteran's room at the Seventh Regiment Armory.

The illustration of the alcove dining-room in the Union League Club-House is faithfully copied from THE ART AMATEUR, to which we do not object, for we are sometimes under obligations to our French contemporary for similar illustrations. But why call it "Maison de Monsieur X.?"

Our friend would not be a Frenchman if he did not find occasion to speak of the fair sex. It begins to dawn upon us that the reason that women were made was to occupy Frenchmen. Apropos of Mrs. Wheeler and her embroideries he has a long digression about the American women's share in art and an enthusiastic rhapsody about her intelligence and culture and artistic capabilities. Nevertheless, he has little praise to bestow on her Cincinnati wood-work or on the embroideries aforesaid. If he has seen what he speaks of, however, he certainly cannot doubt Mrs. Wheeler's capacity for her work, which is probably unapproached to-day in France. Everywhere M. De Leris finds, and in women's work especially, a disposition to obtain strange and eccentric effects by loading incongruous ornaments on objects of all sorts, by wilful discords in coloring, by using all sorts of tricks and subterfuges to avoid paying for honest work and real materials. The extent to which every new craze is carried, whether for

sunflowers or peacock's feathers or for executing bad painting on substances never intended to receive paint, has not escaped him. In fact, in such matters he is perfectly at home, and our lady artists could not do better than take the hint which he very politely conveys to them, that if they were better instructed they would content themselves with doing much less than they now aspire to do.

GUSTAVE DORÉ.

THE death of Gustave Doré will be felt in any corner of the earth more than in Paris where, for the last ten years he rarely came to the surface. His fame was made early. Beginning as a contributor to the "Journal Pour Rire" he soon found employment as a book illustrator, and his best work out of the immense mass of drawings that he has made, is to be found in the edition of Balzac's "Contes Drolatiques" which he illustrated, and in the great wood-cuts of "The Wandering Jew." In the former, especially, the mingling of humor with the grotesquerie redeems it from the ferocity which is displayed in the latter book, and in all subsequent works of the kind. His more recent work, the illustrations to Tennyson, to Milton, to Dante, the Bible, and Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," were marked successively by a waning of the imaginative faculty to which all the value of his work is due. Even "Don Quixote," which came before any of these, shows a falling off. His fame, which will prove to be a more lasting one than most of his critics would allow, will be based upon the "Droll Stories" and "The Wandering Jew."

Although Doré was never a good draughtsman and was a very poor colorist, he continued to get great expression into these early works. The faces of the mob in the scene where Jesus is led to crucifixion are full of the most diversified brutality. The countenance of the Jew himself in the final plate, where as the dead arise he pulls off his tattered shoes preparatory to descending into one of the vacant graves, is a triumph of grotesque genius. And nothing can be finer than Doré's landscapes in that series, though he never knew what a tree is, nor a wave, nor a stone. His great paintings—great as to size—were merely illustrations thrown up large and colored like those on the outside of a show-booth. They filled a gallery to themselves in London, but were little admired. His efforts in sculpture were of even less consequence.

The few illustrations we have selected of Doré's work (see page 87) are fairly representative of his best and worst qualities. It will not escape the notice of the reader that the subjects of the water-color drawings, "London Bridge" and the "Gitana," are treated very like those of the other selections which make up the page. Indeed the "London Bridge," with some modifications, is repeated in Doré's illustrations of "London," to which book our reproductions of "Returning from the Derby" and the street flower-girl also belong. As illustrations, but for one thing, these examples would be altogether excellent. There is the making of a great painting in the group of wretched outcasts sleeping under the cold star-lit heavens in a recess of one of the great stone bridges which span the Thames. The composition is masterly, and even the slight wood-cut gives a picture full of pathos. Also good in its way—and in subject in striking contrast—is the "Derby" illustration. The one thing lacking to make them successful—and this applies generally to the Doré representations of London character—is the total failure to seize the strongly marked national expressions of physiognomy. How unfavorably he compares in this respect with De Neuville, Detaille and De Nittis! But these artists have always been faithful workers from the living model. Doré was so unwise as to depend upon his wonderful memory. Still, in drawing, his illustrations of "London" are perhaps less open to criticism than those in any of his other works. We except, of course, his unfinished Shakespeare illustrations not yet published. There will, by the way, be some curiosity to see how he has acquitted himself of that difficult task. His pencil one would think would hardly be suited to the delineation of some of the most famous creations of the great bard. In his illustrations of the Bible, as we have already indicated, he is far from satisfactory. The example we reproduce of "The Flood," sensational as it is, is perhaps one of the best. Our selection from his "Paradise Lost"—taken at random, like most of our exam-

ples—shows bad drawing to a marked degree. "Don Quixote" and the "Inferno" doubtless afforded subjects best suited to the genius of Doré, which was eminently fitted for delineation of the dramatic and the grotesque. The sublime was evidently beyond his power not only of portrayal, but even of conception.

Of late years Doré had been a constant frequenter of the Hotel Drouot sales, and an eager purchaser of all the strange and wonderful bric-à-brac which used to fill his imagination and his pictures. He was the last of the romantic school of illustrators, and by very much the greatest of them all. The school has died with him.

A BROOKLYN PICTURE EXHIBITION.

A LOAN exhibition held at the well-known art-rooms on Montague Street, in Brooklyn, was so successful that it was prolonged until February 3d, and netted almost eight thousand dollars for the institution it was intended to benefit, the Sheltering Arms Nursery. The rooms were crowded and gay all the time. It is extraordinary what pains a Brooklyn youth will take to confer on a simple art-exhibition the grace and added beauty of his mere costume, the like-to-like of beautiful shirtings among beautiful canvases. He does not lounge in in a business suit after a chop-house dinner, but he goes home and arranges his hair, and struggles into broadcloth and patent leather; the Brooklyn girl, too, obtains fresh roses and buttons on a pair of light gloves, new. It is certain that the pictures of Millet look profounder when you cannot see them for groups of society boys and girls in their loveliest things. The pictures on this occasion were worth the effort. Brooklyn has never had so magnificent a loan. Mr. George I. Seney, the generous capitalist, spared the greater part of his gallery, lending nearly two hundred pictures. The best was the "Luther Singing Ballads in the Streets of Eisenach," by Baron Leys. The next-best picture was the "Girl Carrying a Milk-Jar," by Millet, from the New York gallery of Mr. Runkle. After this we must rank a fish-woman's or harvest-woman's head, by Jules Breton; and then a nude nymph by Henner. The first time that Renouf's "Helping Hand" has been seen in any loan exhibition was on this occasion, and a chaste and studious pleasure was afforded by the serene, inexorable modelling of the fisherman's and child's figures in a cool gray light without shadows. This picture was really purchased by the State for the Luxembourg collection, but was cleverly intercepted by the dealer who sold it to Mr. Seney. Admirable, instructive groups were formed of landscapes by Diaz and landscapes by Rousseau. A red oak-tree by the latter was particularly grand. Centres were made of large Bouguereaus and a Boulanger. Bouguereau's "Angels' Hymn" and "Twilight," from the Salons of 1881 and 1882, were approved for their purity, the purity of wax from which the last drop of honey has been strained out. As for Boulanger's "Hercules and Omphale," lent by Mr. Kenyon, it is a pity that some of our obliging American conflagrations cannot sweep it from the earth. For years it has lumbered about from Philadelphia galleries to New York galleries, always in the way and importunate, an enormity and a bore. The fact that Boulanger at one time gave us honest and learned lessons in art, of the most unpretentious and helpful kind, shall not prevent us from saying that when he constructed the Hercules he constructed a horrid hoax.

"THE Virgin of the Lectern" (La Madonna del Leggio), a painting in tempera attributed to Michael Angelo, has, we see by the London Globe, been sold by its English owner, Mr. Morris Moore, to Prince Lichtenstein, and it is now in Vienna. The price is not given. It was probably large, for years ago an exportation duty on the valuation of 50,000 scudi (about \$48,000) was paid on the picture. The diameter of the painting is 26½ inches, which is about half that of Michael Angelo's "Holy Family" in the Uffizi Gallery. Until the claims of Mr. Moore's candidate were championed a few years ago, the great Florentine was believed to have painted only four easel pictures: the one in the Uffizi; "A Madonna and Child with Angels" and an "Entombment" in the National Gallery, London, both unfinished; and a "Leda" painted for Duke Alfonso of Ferrara, which was destroyed. Prince Lichtenstein's acquisition used to belong to the Counts

Meniconi of Perugia, and was described in a Meniconi catalogue of 1651. We do not find it attributed to Michael Angelo by any more recent authority, excepting Mr. Clarence Cook, who, however, is thoroughly satisfied as to its authenticity.

My Note Book.



NEW YORK "society" evidently is taking a serious interest in art. It must have been something more than mere fashionable impulse that recently brought together so many hundred ladies and gentlemen in Chickering Hall to hear Mr. Seymour Haden lecture on the theory and practice of etching. Five years ago, it is safe to say, not more

than two in a hundred of those present would have been able even to define the meaning of the word in its technical sense. And now New York gives Mr. Haden a larger audience than any he has had on his tour, not excepting Boston. I am afraid, though, that it was not so critical as it might have been. The lecturer, it was felt by the better-informed part of the audience, exalted his pursuit somewhat unfairly to the disadvantage of the art of the engraver. He should not have been applauded when he threw upon the magic-lantern screen an uninteresting fragment of the face of the Virgin from Sharpe's print of Reynolds's "Holy Family," many times magnified, to show how queerly the texture of the flesh was produced by the burin, and then exhibited for comparison an entire head produced by Rembrandt's etching needle. No less disingenuous was the exhibit on the screen of a fragment of herbage from Sharpe's engraving, for comparison with nearly the entire etching of Rembrandt's "Three Trees."

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THIS was on the occasion of the first lecture. The sentiment of the audience on the subject must have reached the ears of Mr. Haden, for he prefaced his second lecture by referring to the matter. He denied the imputation of unfairness. He had shown, he said—speaking only of the herbage matter—three inches of the etching and the same number of inches of the engraving; and if the latter compared so very unfavorably with the former it was so much the worse for the engraving. This was delivered in Mr. Haden's charming, good-natured manner, and a responsive smile of assent rippled through the no less good-natured audience. But the lecturer's explanation certainly did not satisfy the thinking portion of his hearers. They would have liked to ask him whether the engraving by Sharpe was not much larger than the etching by Rembrandt, and whether therefore the details of the herbage shown in the three inches of the one were not proportionately magnified to the disadvantage of the other, by comparison. Such was the fact. The size of the engraving was 18 inches by 22; that of the etching only 8 inches by 11.

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I CANNOT impress too strongly upon amateur collectors of coins the folly of tampering with old specimens by burnishing them and otherwise "restoring" them. It is shocking to think that there should be any necessity for such a caution. But this ignorant practice is unfortunately common in this country. A gentleman who "patronizes" art in New York showed me his collection, in which some really fine old Greek coins had been rubbed until they shone like the buttons on a lackey's livery. Reginald Stuart Poole in "Lectures on Art" (Macmillan) recently published, says: "My feeling, as keeper of coins in the National Museum is very strong against restoration, because I have suffered long and tedious labor and have had to draw upon the national purse for thousands of pounds to replace the Roman coins which had been touched up and restored, and consequently had lost all their historical value."

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A CORRESPONDENT writes from the West that an art student in whom some of his friends are interested recently was sent to Europe to study, and that the young man has forwarded from Munich, among other pictures, an alleged copy in oils of Rubens' painting of "The Betrayal of Samson to the Philistines by Delilah."

He asks: "Did Rubens paint such a picture? Is it regarded by art critics as a fair example of his skill? Where is the picture? What is its size and value?" Our correspondent seems to suspect that the gentlemen who sent this young man abroad to study are the victims of a practical joke. His description of the picture is charmingly naïve. He says: "The scene appears to be an interior heavily draped with red. There is a small lounge or couch in the foreground left corner, upon which reclines a small-headed half nude female figure with arms short and muscled like a butcher; she has pudgy ill-shaped hands, in one of which (the right), resting on the couch, is clutched a pair of scissors for which Sheffield presumably furnished the model. The upper arm (right) of this wretched-looking female is supported from behind by a woman dimly shown. A small dog seems emerging from under the couch. A lady's shoe of the Louis XIV. style lies on the floor. The figure of Samson appears rising from the same couch, half naked, in a fierce struggle with four or five men, one of whom wears the turban of a Turk; another in the rear of Samson holds above him, in a threatening attitude, something resembling an artist's brush. Another in the rear bears aloft a small torch. The tone of the whole work is very dark, so much so as to render it impossible to say whether the scene is night or day. Yet Delilah appears in very high light as well as the shoulder and left foot of Samson. While the rear of the picture is very dark, it seems to show an opening out into the night. The torch, as shown, cannot produce the light on the forward figures; yet it is not otherwise accounted for in the picture. To inartistic eyes the picture is either a fraud or an abominable copy, or we have exceedingly crude ideas of what constitutes the magnificence in the creations of the old masters. If there be such a picture by Rubens can you advise me whether a photograph or small copy can be had, and where?"

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ALTOGETHER this is not a bad judgment of Rubens' well-known "Samson and Delilah" in the Pinacothek, as the picture might be viewed from a student's copy of it. My correspondent is doubtless right as to the anachronisms of costumes and accessories of which he speaks, and his failure to admire Rubens' ungraceful women is not surprising or discreditable. In the days of the great Fleming, artists were not as particular in the matter of studio properties as are those of to-day; and the predilection of Rubens for healthy and fleshy women is seen in nearly all his works. His young men and children, too, are often uncomely. So far, then, probably the student has not erred very grievously. But if his copy shows bad composition and bad color, he has assuredly missed the very qualities most worthy of admiration in this master. But he ought not to be judged hastily. To set him to copy a Rubens is not a fair way to test his ability.

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IT is odd how often artists living thousands of miles apart hit not only upon the same subject and the same treatment of the subject of a painting, but also on the very same title. R. M. Shurtleff and Rosa Bonheur, for example, with the wide Atlantic rolling between them, have each produced such a picture of a stag, and the title "On the Alert" has been given in both cases. No one would suppose for a minute that the famous Frenchwoman borrowed from the American. Yet the latter produced his picture in 1879, and it was engraved in the London Art Journal; the engraving of Rosa Bonheur's work is dated about two years later.

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A SINGULAR story about a spurious Velasquez was told me recently by a New Yorker who used to live in Paris: "Some twenty-five years ago," he said, "I used to be intimate with Mons. X., whose studio was not far from Notre Dame de Lorette, in the 'Quartier Bréda.' His principal occupation was the restoration of old paintings. Many years' practice had given him a perfect knowledge of the different styles and mannerisms of old masters, so that it was next to impossible to distinguish between the old and modern work on one of these 'restored' pictures. Certain Paris dealers make a regular business of old portraits, which, by skilful 'restoration,' have been transformed from humble beings wholly unknown to fame into great historical persons. They pick up old canvases representing men or women of the Louis XIV. and Louis XV. periods for about ten francs apiece,

and hand them over to the 'restorer,' who, carefully retaining the original work of the draperies, dress, and other accessories, paints in new heads and shoulders, according to the requirements of the market. Thus, the graceful head of a young La Vallière or De Montespan replaces the features of an old Madame Dupont; Monsieur Dubois, quite unknown at the time of the 'Grand Monarque,' save for the excellent sausages he used to sell, under the dexterous brush of the 'restorer' becomes a Mignard or a Largillière (painted by himself); and the brave Monsieur Dubois, having been so considerate as to have had himself painted with the classical 'perruque,' the modern artist is materially aided in the work of transformation. When the pictures are so bad that even with the addition of new faces they would not pass for 'old masters,' then they are sold at a reasonable profit to the 'noblesse' of the second empire, who hang them in their houses as portraits of 'ancestors.'"

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BUT in his leisure, it appears that the ingenious Monsieur X. enjoyed painting original works by the old masters. He generally selected an old canvas on which some prominent color predominated; for the old ground can be seen through a new painting and gives depth to it. "Monsieur X.," said my friend, "remarked one day, 'If you should happen to see in any old shop a large canvas with plenty of red on it, I wish you would buy it for me, as I want to paint a portrait of Philip IV. by Velasquez, and I must have a rich old red ground for it.' Some days later I was passing through Versailles and picked up for five francs a splendid old 'croute' representing a cardinal in his scarlet robes. I took the canvas to Monsieur X., who was delighted, and he at once set to work. In a few weeks the picture was done, and a Belgian art dealer, who had impatiently watched its progress, for the sum of 3000 francs became the happy owner of it. It was sent away to Brussels and I never supposed I should see it again. But one day, visiting the gallery of Monsieur O., a man as celebrated for his pictures as for his great works as an engineer, the first thing I saw was this same 'Velasquez.' He asked me to congratulate him, as he had just bought it at a great bargain, having paid only 60,000 francs for it. I told Monsieur X. about the matter, and he hastened to satisfy the unfortunate connoisseur that he had been 'sold,' which he did by simply removing with turpentine the tips of the shoes of the royal Philip, and showing him a bit of the cardinal's dress concealed beneath them. The wicked Belgian dealer was compelled to take back his 'Velasquez,' and the last I heard of it was that it had found its way into England, where it had been bought for a large sum by a rich collector, whose name I could never learn." My friend thinks that one of the Philips by Velasquez sold at the late Hamilton sale might give a clue to the whereabouts of this missing treasure. But on this point I believe him to be quite mistaken.

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THE Portfolio for January is unusually interesting, particularly in the letterpress. Two crayon studies of female heads, by E. J. Poynter, are admirably reproduced; there is a good steel-plate engraving of a child, after Millais, and a capital etching of the Musée Cluny by Toussaint.

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THERE is an ugly story afloat about a frustrated attempt by a Boston newspaper writer to make money during the exhibition of Bastien-Lepage's "Joan of Arc" in that city last autumn by selling without the knowledge of the owner the privilege of photographing the picture. Three hundred dollars, I am informed, was paid to him by the publishers with whom he made the bargain. The firm, however, learning soon afterward the dishonorable circumstances of the matter, demanded the instant return of the money, and got it.

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THE Salmagundi Club has opened its membership to wood-engravers. A very proper step. There are some members of the craft in every way entitled to the rank of artist. The wood-block, in many instances, has been only the stepping-stone to the easel—if the oddity of the expression may be excused. J. A. S. Monks, J. W. Champney, George L. Brown and H. P. Share may be mentioned in this connection. The steel-plate engravers who have become painters are still more numerous. Durand, Shirlaw, Sartain and the Smillies, are prominent on this list.

MONTEZUMA,